1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

INDUSTRIES AND IMPLEMENTS.

281 When a skin was brought in, it was hung on a sort of tripod, and with a chisel-like flesher of buffalo-leg bone the meat was removed. Then the hide was stretched on the ground to dry. When dried, the hair and thin coat of skin on the same side were cut off with the familiar implement of bent elk-horn, always provided, in recent times, with a metal blade. To make rawhide, nothing more was done. To make dressed skin, liver, grease, and brains, boiled and mixed in the proper proportion, were rubbed [177] or soaked into the skin and then removed with an ordinary scraper, now usually of sheet-iron or tin. Finally the skin was worked over with a rough stone or a bone. In preparing buffalo-skins for a tent, four steps were recognized: first, drying the skins; next, removing the hair; third, soaking them; and, last, scraping and working them over. Skins were softened by being drawn over a rope of buffalo-sinew.

281 342 476 When a woman had prepared enough buffalo-skins for a tent, she made a feast and invited other women who were skilful at making tents. The most expert of these fitted and tacked the skins together loosely, and the others sewed them fast. When a robe was to be embroidered, the woman who wanted to make it prepared food and invited other women to help her in her work. When the robe was finished, the man who was to receive it was called in, and it was given to [illegible]

281 Caps of buffalo-skin were worn in winter. They were provided with flaps that were pulled down over the ears and held by a string fastened under the chin. Mittens of buffalo-skin were also used, tied together by a string which passed behind the neck. When the hunter was ready to shoot, he slipped his hands out of the mittens.

282 Simple flat unbraided ropes of rawhide were cut out of the skin in a long spiral. After having been cut, they were stretched between two sticks. In order to soften them, they were covered with manure, or tied to a horse that dragged them over the ground until they became pliable.

323 252 Pottery is declared to have been made formerly of clay mixed with crushed rock. Rawhide bags, drawn together at the top with a string, were also used for cooking by means of hot rocks. The often described Plains method of cooking in holes in the ground lined with rawhide was also followed.

372 When fire was struck with flint and steel, dry mushrooms were sometimes used as tinder.

411 Bows were most frequently made of cherry-wood, but sometimes of ash. Ash was harder and more elastic, but more brittle. Sinew backing was

1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

159 561 796 Subsequently he was a "grandfather" in the crazy-dance, but in none of the other ceremonies. He never participated in the sun-dance, having had no occasion to do so, he said. Nevertheless he once was the man selected during the sun-dance to kill a buffalo with one arrow, the buffalo's skin being cut up into thongs with which the rafters of the lodge are fastened. He succeeded in killing the buffalo with one arrow.

Another man, now middle-aged, belonged to the "holding-to-a-dog's-tail" company. He made successively the fly-dance, the star-dance, and then the crazy-dance.

Star and War Dances.

171 561 796 575 [177] At present the organization into comparatively small companies is no longer maintained. In its place there is a division of the young men of the tribe into two groups, one of which practises, or did until recently, the star-dance; the other, the grass or war dance. The latter is universally stated to be a recent importation from the Sioux, apparently within the present generation. The star-dance, however, is an old ceremony, it is claimed; and this assertion is borne out by the occurrence among the Arapaho of the analogous star-dance. Among the Arapaho the star-dance, like the kit-fox dance, is a preliminary which appears to be gone through by all the men of the tribe, but has neither the standing, the organization, nor the definite observances and regalia of the subsequent ceremonies. Among the Gros Ventre the star-dance was formerly also outside the regular series of dances. It is generally spoken of as having been a warrior dance, made at any time and on any suitable occasion, and without the rigorously prescribed course of other dances. Some men seem to have made it before the fly-dance, and others afterward. Even in former times, however, before the war-dance had come among the Gros Ventre, the star-dance included only part of the young men of the tribe. The old men surviving from certain companies have never taken part in the star-dance, and explain this by the fact that there was rivalry between their company and the star-dancers. It might thus, perhaps, seem that a star company had a ceremony of its own, the star-dance, from which the members of rival companies naturally held aloof; but it is very improbable that only one age-company parallel to the others, and none of these others, should have had a distinctive ceremony. It is also improbable that this company, being one of many, should have been so large as to include about half of the men of the tribe, for it appears that some such large proportion took part in the star-dance. This makes it almost impossible to believe that there existed a star company exactly

1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

they did not stay in one place, but at times moved about. They shook their rattles constantly. They did not sing, but uttered a pressed-out "Hah." Two atsaan (assistants or servants of the dance) attended near the door. They brought back such of the dancers as became exhausted from lack of sleep and left the ceremony. Two men who had fought and struck a mounted enemy while they themselves were mounted, rode on horseback. When they went to dance, the assistants went to them and helped them dismount. If the dancers were inactive, these two men went about among them to make them arise. If the dancers remained on the ground, they struck them with their whips. The spectators outside lifted up the bottom of the tent and looked underneath; or, as the tent was not very high (the lodge being roofless), those who were on horseback looked over it.

The Gros Ventre star-rattles consist of a tube of rawhide, an inch or less in diameter, bent on itself into a hoop three or four inches across, and attached to a stick handle half a foot or more in length. Apparently one end of the tube projects out from the hoop forming the head of the rattle, sufficiently to allow the stick to be inserted. The rawhide is painted, and ornamented with three or five bunches of feathers. The handle is wrapped with cloth, the upper end of which usually is cut into a small fringe at the base of the head of the rattle, while the lower end hangs free beyond the handle. The general outline of the rattle is similar to the Arapaho star-rattle, this having a round or kite-shaped flat head at the end of the handle. The hoop feature is, however, wanting in the Arapaho rattles, which are without a perforation. The Gros Ventre decorations of their rattles — whether feathers, cloth attachments, or painting — are usually crude and gaudy. It seems that the rattles now in use are a degenerate modern form. In the majority of cases the feathers attached are dyed: some are cut from the quill. This indicates a recent modifying influence. Many of the feathers are cut off transversely. This may or may not be an old feature. The piece shown in Fig. 31 has least of the base qualities of these rattles, and is a probable approximation to the older type.

Of some of the specimens to be seen in the Museum, descriptions are here given.

Fig. 31 (50–1783). Handle covered with red flannel, which hangs below the handle about two feet. Fringe of same at base of head, and same forms periphery of head. Rawhide of head painted blue, red on inside of loop. A string appears to have been wound around the head while the hide was fresh, and removed after the painting, leaving radiating white depressions. Head ornamented at top and sides with three bunches of four black-and-white, squarish, half-downy feathers attached by thongs. At the top there is also an eagle-feather. Handle wound with thong, forming at the end a loop to pass over the wrist. The head of this rattle was said to represent a star.

1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

The Gros Ventre also introduce into the ceremony a thunder symbolism that the Arapaho lack, or have in a much less developed form. The lightning symbol on the centre pole, from which water can be drawn, and the power of the thunder to strike with lightning any dancer who drinks other water than this, evidence this.

Another element special to the Gros Ventre is the introduction of ceremonies relating to war, such as the dramatic performances and the seeing of the approach of the enemy by the pledger.

Features introducing miraculous and sometimes purely personal supernatural powers are apparently quite lacking from the Arapaho ceremony. Among the Gros Ventre there are the raising of the centre pole, the production of water from the centre pole with the crow, the clairvoyance of the pledger as regards the enemy, and the visions of some of the dancers.

In summary, the exact duration and sequence of all events in the Gros Ventre ceremony are not yet clear; the preliminary prairie-chicken tent does not correspond very closely to the Arapaho rabbit-tent; and the connection of the ceremony with the thunder, the introduction of warlike elements, and that of miraculous or personal features, are peculiar, or nearly so, to the Gros Ventre as compared with the Arapaho.

MODERN CEREMONIAL OBJECTS.

The recent ceremonial objects of the Gros Ventre are somewhat different from those of the Arapaho. The Arapaho were deeply affected by the ghost-dance movement, more, it is said, than any other tribe; and many of their modern religious regalia have a distinct character of their own. The Gros Ventre received the ghost-dance from the Arapaho, but it seems to have taken little hold of them. The only distinctive ghost-dance objects seen or obtained were two small hoops and a few balls, all of which resemble Arapaho types. The chief modern dance-ceremony of the Gros Ventre, the only one performed at present, is the grass or war dance obtained from the Sioux, and evidently a modification of the widespread Omaha dance upon which the Arapaho crow-dance is also based. This dance has in recent years been still further modified, until its character now is very similar to that of the crow-dance. The regalia used in this dance at present are very individual, usually crude, and almost always stylistically degenerate. The delicate character and distinct style of the majority of modern Arapaho dance-objects are lacking.

The treatment of feathers in such objects is quite different among the Gros Ventre and Arapaho. The Gros Ventre rarely ornament their feathers

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

the marching song was sung.[17] Upon reaching the entrance of the enclosure, which had been constructed in the middle of the camp circle, the double column parted, and filed around the inside of the enclosure and took their places. The noted men bearing whips, having been helped in dismounting, took up their positions at either side of the entrance, and the musicians carried the drum to the center of the enclosure where they provided the music for the dancing.

The dance of each society was distinctive. The Stars carried rattles, each designed by its owner,[18] which they waved about, as they danced. The Wolf-men did not have rattles or any special paraphernalia of the kind, but symbolized wolves as they stepped about, one hand at the forehead, and the other held behind to represent the tail.

These dances with their preliminary "begging" expeditions were not put on regularly, but at the discretion of the societies. A time would be chosen when the whole tribe, or most of the bands thereof, were together, when there were no Sacred Dances in immediate prospect, and when there was no apparent danger from the enemy. If these conditions prevailed, one of the societies might proceed, singing loudly: "Harden your hearts, Wolf-men (or Stars)," meaning, "be prepared to give."[19] Not immediately, but some time later, when auspicious conditions again prevailed, the other society would "retaliate."

These dances were purely social. In between times members belonging to one would compete with members of the other in horse-racing, hand-game gambling, "bragging contests" recounting conquests in love and war—each trying to out-do his opposite number.

Sometime between 1875 and 1880 the Wolf-men adopted the Grass Dance from the Assiniboine. Thereafter this Society was sometimes called the Grass dancers.[20]

The Boy was under the impression that the Stars and Wolf-men

[17] Recorded as No. 102.

[18] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, pp. 236–37, with illustration.

[19] These songs were recorded as Nos. 93, 94 for the Stars.

[20] Kroeber, 1908, p. 238 describes this dance as the "war-dance." For the adoption of the Grass Dance and subsequent history of the two societies, see Flannery, 1946, pp. 39–70.

342 were sewn together with sinew. The women selected the poles for the lodge, as well as for the travois, and were responsible for [484] erecting and taking down the lodge, for the arrangement of the interior, for the making of the travois, and for the packing and moving of impedimenta.

The foundation of three poles for the lodge was tied together and then raised as a unit. The other poles were arranged one by one, starting with those of the front. The cover of buffalo hides was tied to one pole, the "backbone," which was placed at the center-back, the cover then being drawn into place and fastened securely at the front, with small wooden pins usually made of cherry-tree wood. The ordinary Gros Ventre lodge stakes were shaped like a pin with a relatively small head. One informant, [184 however, stated that this form of stake often came loose where 177] the cover became taut with the wind, and that she had found the forked type, first observed by her many years ago when visiting another tribe to the south, far more satisfactory.

342 Old lodge covers were saved and cut up to make a sort of lining 353 at the bottom of the lodge in winter, and the snow scraped away to make place for the lodge was piled up on the outside thereof for extra warmth. In summer the ground inside the lodge was covered with willows, sagebrush or rye grass. Decorated robes as windbreaks were sometimes suspended in the lodge behind the fancy backrests, which were made by the women from slender willow rods. The women gathered and peeled the rods, although the young men helped straighten them by pulling them through their teeth. A willow ring encircled the fireplace and a broom of buckbrush was always kept handy. Personal belongings were neatly disposed against the wall of the lodge and in front of these were placed the skins which served as bedding by night and as seats by day. The painted parfleshes were given prominence to lend colorful touches. Dishes, utensils, and stored food were suspended 412 from poles well off the floor.

415 Among the articles of household equipment may be mentioned knives, both of bone and of metal, kettles, horn spoons, fleshing tools, etc., and food containers of various sorts. For the latter, [237] the membrane protecting the heart of the buffalo, the paunch, the bladder, and the intestines of the buffalo, as well as those of the

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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daughter, and might receive gifts from relatives, but would otherwise have few opportunities of obtaining horses. 231 556

In former times the rules regarding inheritance were fairly simple. If a man died, his relatives took the more valuable livestock, while anyone was free to come into the lodge and take any other personal property of the deceased which was not to be buried with him. The man's relatives would not, however, take the horses which belonged to his wife or wives, or which had been given before his death to his children. When a woman died she usually would have little valuable property in any case, but, again, any other woman might rush in and strip the lodge of whatever personal property might be therein, including food. The close family of the deceased were "so grief-stricken that they wouldn't notice who takes what," and "a husband would never keep anything of his wife's." It was said, too, that "women were braver than men in disposing of their property before death, and often gave gifts of personal property to those they wished to have them." 428 768 [431]

In objects derived from the white man, the value put upon them was mainly utilitarian. For example, in matching wagers on one occasion a man put up a gold watch. There was no one on the other side who had a watch to offer, but a spy-glass was considered the equivalent. It was explained that the value of the watch in dollars—whether it had a fine gold case or not—would not be taken into consideration. The question in matching was to find things of equal value to the Indian in his way of life. To illustrate this The Boy told of a gift to his father, Lame Bull, from a white trader on the Saskatchewan, of a hobble which locked. "Perhaps this didn't have a high value in dollars, but it was considered extremely valuable by Lame Bull because it saved him many a race horse. Even though the enemy might sneak a horse out of camp, being unable to unfasten the hobble, he would have to abandon the valuable horse before getting very far away." 177 435

On the other hand, while utility was certainly an important consideration in the Gros Ventres' evaluation of goods produced by themselves, various other elements were taken into account. A horse procured from the enemy was perhaps the most valuable of all things to the Gros Ventres; aside from other considerations, a man would have risked his life to obtain it and that in itself lent 435 554 231

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

514 country do what I did. When buffalo go to drink, Indians just
522 shoot them. I was just re-enacting this. What I did was proper.'
*796 To this the husband replied: 'My elder brother, that's true.'

"When the people heard the laughing, they came flocking around. The other Blood was still laughing, in fact was in a laughing spell. His relatives carried him out and took him home and there dashed water on him and revived him."

Peyote Cult and Ghost Dance

668 What little we were able to gather on the peyote cult and Ghost
795 Dance among the Gros Ventres, is here presented.

Peyotism is entirely lacking among the present-day Gros Ventres and appears never to have gained a foothold among them in the past. Some individuals, we were told by The Boy and Thick, had tried to introduce it, but without success as the Gros Ventres were "a little afraid of it." The fact that the Gros Ventres have been under fairly intensive Catholic missionary influence since the middle 1880's may partly account for the resistance.[43] Some young Gros Ventres, who were on a visit to the Crows, were invited to take part in Peyote observances, but declined.

On the fortunes of the Ghost Dance among the Gros Ventres, our chief informants were Cora Chandler and her husband Al Chandler, Coming Daylight, The Boy, Thick, Charles Buckman and Thomas Main. Singer had joined the movement but though perfectly willing to speak freely about other subjects was somewhat reluctant to talk about this one. Our other informants had not joined the Ghost Dance, but Cora Chandler's people "were strong for it." Coming Daylight was, as will be explained, in close contact with certain phases of it, and The Boy had been present as a spectator at many Ghost Dance gatherings.

● [177] The Ghost Dance was called among the Gros Ventres, not "Ghost Dance," but "Little Round Dances." It was first introduced among them in 1891 by a Gros Ventre from the Hays area who had lived among the Arapaho of Wyoming a number of years, had

[43] Coming Daylight came in contact with the Peyote Cult on a visit some years ago to Oklahoma, but, she remarked, "the Catholic Indians in Oklahoma were against peyote."

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

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attended the Ghost Dance there, and had returned to Hays in that year. As introducer and leader of the cult he preached wa:hatcan (lit. "reunion of all together," cf. wahanichina "unite" [Sifton]), signifying the rising of the dead Indians either in the near future or at the end of the world, and predicted the return of the buffalo, and into his message wove something of both Christ and the Flat Pipe. Big gatherings of Gros Ventres listened to him. Some few became converts, but most remained spectators and hearers only and declined to join. Further, the Gros Ventres did not join at all in the Ghost Dance political uprising. They had previously given their word not to go to war with the whites. The movement lasted just two years and then died out.[44]

The factors accounting for the resistance to and decline of the Ghost Dance among the Gros Ventres were, according to The Boy and Charles Buckman, the following. The older men and women did not believe Returns-to-war and the other promoters because "they had to be shown, and they felt that it was impossible for the dead, to rise again and for the buffalo to come back." The younger fellows, of the age of The Boy and Charles Buckman at the time, that is, around twenty years, did not believe because "the younger generation was then going to the Catholic missionaries and had learned different." Moreover, in 1893, some Wyoming Arapaho visited Hays and from them the Gros Ventres found that Returns-to-war had "exaggerated the story," so they all quit the Ghost Dance.

From Cora Chandler, Coming Daylight and Al Chandler we gathered the following information that sheds additional light on the rise of the Gros Ventre Ghost Dance and especially on the causes believed to have led to its rejection and decline.

During the rites, there would be round dances; the dancers would be painted after which they would sing and sing; the songs

[44] Mooney, 1896, p. 817 in his exhaustive study of the situation states that a Gros Ventre had been visiting in 1889 among the Arapaho and "heard the story and brought back the wonderful news to the Gros Ventres and Assiniboine of Fort Belknap, but although his account was received by some with unquestioning faith, the excitement had in it nothing of a dangerous character."

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

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record of the original Jack Wilson (Wovoka) visiting the Gros Ventres. Could the Jack Wilson above mentioned be some other Indian who was an impostor or one who in good faith took Wovoka's white-man's name?

In addition, the causes listed by The Boy and Thick for the failure of the Ghost Dance to take real root among the Gros Ventre, the chicanery, racketeering and sexual episodes, attributed by many of the Gros Ventres to the leaders of the movement, must have contributed appreciably to the same result.

At any rate, the movement lasted only two years, 1891-1893, and appears to have left no permanent impression on Gros Ventre life. At or shortly after these dates, however the modern non-gambling hand game was introduced from Ghost Dance sources.

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3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

band, Little Man; Drops In The Fire, a horse for curing Crow Bull; Stiffarm, lots of things, horses and so forth, including "one lovely mare," for treating—unsuccessfully—Little Man. Good Singer received "horses, blankets and such things," for curing Singer herself. Bull Lodge was given "the best horses" for treating Al Chandler's uncle. All the foregoing payments were for cases of serious illness. Mae Main stated that a person who wanted to procure a certain contraceptive root would have to "pay a big price for this, sometimes two or three horses."

Sometimes, how commonly or rarely it is hard to say, a medicine man would stipulate sex relations as his payment or part thereof. Cora Chandler had heard "that some medicine men take women afterwards as part of the payment for curing." "This," she explained, "is why Coming Daylight was afraid of that medicine man when he was stark naked," having disrobed before starting to treat her (supra, p. 338). "Occasionally," Thomas Main had heard, "in very serious circumstances a man, to save the life of a brother or of someone dear to him, would pay the fee of giving his wife [allowing the doctor sex relations with her]."

The relative decline of native doctoring is due in part to the influence of the missionaries and of the civil authorities, in part no doubt to educational and other accultural factors. All the Gros Ventres today are members of the Catholic Church. "Joe Assiniboine," said Coming Daylight, "a good medicine man, still living [in 1940: he died in 1942 or 1943], never joined the Church; joining would take his power away from him." Stiffarm, one of the last of the great doctors, who died in 1932, on becoming a Catholic and later a catechist, is reported by one informant to have renounced his doctoring powers. One reason Coming Daylight gave for not accepting doctoring power herself was, "my children were all Catholics and I joined the Church and I will be a good Catholic till I die." Little Man, Al Chandler's adopted father, wanted to pass on some of his curing power to him, but Al did not want it, because, he said, he was afraid he would "poison someone" but also on account of the Catholic Church. . . . "The Catholics didn't want you to do such things."

525 Women (and men?) also gambled at ring-and-pin, the "ring" being made of four bones from deer feet.[4] The contest was mostly just for fun; the losers would have to "cook" for the winners.

Several types of bow and arrow contests, serving as archery practice as well as gambling sports, were indulged in by boys, young men, and sometimes older men, not, however, by girls or women. Both distance and accuracy contests occurred. In the latter, the target was a stick or arrow stuck upright in a small mound, or an arrow shot by one contestant a desired distance, say, 100 or 150 yards. In another kind of contest, a bow was set slanting, string upward; the string was vibrated by an arrow and the arrow on release flew toward the target about 35 or 40 feet away. In these bow and arrow contests, the wagers were small, usually arrows, sometimes a bow. Wagers were made by the players, and at times by onlookers too.

The modern 4-button hand game, distinct from the earlier 2-button one, is played more for fun than for winnings. At most the losers may be expected to [177] "cook" for the winners. This modern non-gambling hand game came to the Gros Ventre through an Arapaho, Dances All Night, in 1897, shortly after the [68] time the Ghost Dance was introduced among them (in 1891). The Ghost Dance itself had little popularity among the Gros Ventre and after a couple of years died out among them, but the non-gambling hand game took root and survived. At first, we were informed, it was played with two buttons, but after 1903 with four.

525 178 Gambling at playing cards, sometimes for large stakes, occurs today, but usually at the nearby white settlements, between Gros Ventre and white males. Some of the older Gros Ventre are shrewd poker players, and the younger ones play poker among themselves, but we obtained no record of ruinous stakes at cards among the Gros Ventre themselves on the reservation.

Major Gambling Games and Sports

525 The three more important gambling games and sports of half a century or more ago were races, the wheel game, and the 2-button hand game.

1. *Races*

[575] [648] On horse races, usually between the two soldier-police societies, the Stars and Wolves (the latter became later the "Grass Dancers"), or between the Gros Ventre and other tribes, such as the Piegan, at intertribal gatherings, were placed large bets—horses, saddles, and so forth—by the men, not however by

4 Illustration in Culin, *op. cit.*, fig. 706, p. 537.

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

left, although we still have reports of a hand game between the Gros Ventre and the Flathead, staged at Glacier Park, Montana, as late as 1922, in which Joe Assiniboine represented the Gros Ventre. Today neither the wheel game nor the 2-button hand game is played. 525 182

Hard times, for a short period near-famine conditions, prevailed for a while after 1884; an economy of abundance gave place to an economy of scarcity. [735] While a world survey of gambling reveals, so far as we can discern, no significant correlation between gambling and abundance or scarcity economies, extreme and sudden economic shock and shift, such as occurred among the Gros Ventre in the years immediately following 1884, may well have slowed up the gambling pace.

Around 1897 the non-gambling hand game was introduced, won favor, and [177] persists down to the present. Today there is little gambling among the Gros Ventre on the reservation. Most of what occurs among them takes place off [178] the reservation, at nearby white villages and towns, in the form of poker or other card games for money, between Gros Ventre and whites.

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6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13
Blackfoot NF6 Assiniboine NF4
Montagnais NH6
Ojibwa NG6
Cree NG4

B 787 776 ghost went away. They waited and sang the song. When the ghost came back, they asked him: "What did you find out?" He replied: "I went clear to the Little Rockies and the Bear Paws. Between the two ranges, a creek makes a big bend, and in the middle of the big bend is a ridge. There your young men got killed."

When some years ago, The Boy told me, the road between Hays (at the foot of the Little Rockies) and Three Buttes was being built, on a ridge several holes were found in the rocks, and in one of the holes five skulls, as if a fight had occurred there. Platted Hair believed this to have been the scene of the above fight.

G B [177] We may add that there has been a great deal of close association between the Gros Ventres and the Blackfoot-Blood-Piegan, especially in recent generations.

Assiniboine Rite

The writer's first information on the shaking tent rite among the Assiniboine of Fort Belknap Reservation (which they have long shared with the Gros Ventres) came as a casual afterthought from a Gros Ventre informant in 1931. After giving the summary account of the Gros Ventre rite recorded earlier in this article, he added that the same rite is also found among the Fort Belknap Assiniboine.

G A [71] In the summer of 1940, my chief Gros Ventre informant, The Boy, stated that the Fort Belknap Assiniboine also had the ghost helper concept. In the case of one ghost-possessor at least, there were bells on top [or at the top] of his lodge, and when the ghost helper came, the bells would shake and the whole top of the lodge would shake. This possessor's name was "Standing Dog," or "Dog Rises," or a similar name. One ghost is credited with having thrown a performer on top of the lodge frame. Further details were not known by The Boy, and I had no good opportunity to consult the Assiniboine themselves.

A [79]

Montagnais-Cree-Otcipwe Rite

C M O [71] The "shaking tent" rite is universal or practically so among

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13
Assiniboine NF4 Montagnais NH6
Blackfoot NF6 Ojibwa NG6
Cree NG4

BCMOCA 787 171

Cree-Oteipwe, the power to summon the shaking tent spirit(s) is not thrust upon the person by any spirit, as in a great measure it is among the Gros Ventres.

In general, the shaking tent rite appears to have much more relative importance and to play a much more preponderant role in the total magico-religious life of the Montagnais-Cree-Oteipwe than of the Gros Ventres, Blackfoot-Blood and Assiniboine.

BCMOCA [177]

That there is a historical relationship between the two above contrasted shaking tent complexes appears very probable from the many specific and distinctive elements they share in common and from the almost continuous geographical distribution of the complexes, a distribution moreover predominantly among the main body of Algonquian-speaking peoples of the taiga and adjacent open country and the aberrant-Algonquian-speaking groups of the Plains, the Gros Ventres, the Blackfoot, and the Cheyenne.

Addendum on Wider Distribution

G 787 171 [114]

It has not been the purpose of the present paper to deal with the total distribution of the shaking tent rite and with the historical problems connected with such distribution. The following summary notes are added merely to contribute a mite toward filling out the picture of distribution as given in Ray's historical study and Hallowell's socio-psychological one.[2]

In the east, the shaking tent is not reported in our published sources, to my knowledge, south of the St. Lawrence. The record by Maurault for the Abnaki does not mention shaking of the conjurer's tent.[3] Inquiries by the writer in the field in 1931 among the Chipewyan and Dogrib of the Mackenzie-Slave watershed brought consistently negative results; in fact informants who knew well and gave many details of the rite as practised among the Cree of Ft. McMurray (Athabaska R.) and Ft. Chipewyan (L. Athabaska), on the Cree-Chipewyan borderline, and who were equally familiar with both Cree and Chipewyan

[2] Ray, 1941; Hallowell, 1942. See footnote 1.

[3] J. A. Maurault, Histoire des Abenakis depuis 1605 jusqu'à nos jours, Québec, 1866, 30.

7: Flannery E-5 (1940, 1945) 1947
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[P.39] PRIMITIVE MAN

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THE CHANGING FORM AND FUNCTIONS OF THE GROS VENTRE GRASS DANCE

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THE purpose of the present paper is to discuss the changing form, and to show as far as possible the changing functions, of the Grass dance in Gros Ventre culture from the time of its introduction between 1875 and 1880 up to about 1920 when it had paled off to relative insignificance.

The Gros Ventre tribe of Montana was one of the many which adopted the Grass dance, sometimes called the Omaha dance, as it spread rapidly over the northern plains in relatively recent times. Wissler studied the distribution and diffusion of the Grass dance as a trait-complex,[1] basing his interpretation upon his own observations, especially among the Blackfeet, and on the descriptions of this dance as published for other tribes. For the Gros Ventres he depended mainly on Kroeber's data,[2] the only source available, but he himself had visited that tribe and collected, among other specimens, regalia used by them in the Grass

[1] Wissler, C., General discussion of shamanistic and dancing societies, AMNH-AP 11, pt. 12 1916, pp. 862–71.

[2] Kroeber, A. L., Ethnology of the Gros Ventre, AMNH-AP 1, pt. 4, 1908, pp. 234, 238–39.

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796 dance.[3] Wissler was well aware of the importance of the Grass
114 dance in the transition period of Plains culture from the old to the new, and suggested further studies be made. Nevertheless, no one has given us a close-up, so far as I know, of its dynamic aspects in the life of any one of the tribes who shared the phenomenon.

796 In 1901 Kroeber noted that the Grass dance as then performed
114 by the Gros Ventres differed considerably in form from that
●177 which was described to him as having been the case when it was first adopted. He gives us a brief description of the earlier procedure, but naturally enough no details regarding the then current method of carrying out the Grass dance, since his concern was with the older tribal culture. He merely states: "It is no longer a young man's dance, nor confined to a certain group. All the people in the tribe take part in it. It is very similar in character to the present-day Arapaho crow-dance, as well as in the place it occupies in the life of the people. Among the Gros Ventre it is now the only dance held."[4] Our data, gathered during two visits to the Fort Belknap Reservation in 1940 and 1945, confirm Kroeber's and supplement them to a considerable extent.

121 In treating of the Grass dance then, we shall distinguish be-
128 tween an earlier period extending from between 1875 to 1880 up to about 1890, and a later period comprising the years from roughly 1890 to 1916. We shall first describe the form of the Grass dance as it was in the earlier period, then the changes which were later introduced, and finally we shall discuss the varying functions during both periods.

The Form: Earlier Period

796 According to Wissler the dance originated with the Dakota
177 about 1860 and is traceable as a development of the older Pawnee
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[3] These specimens are in the American Museum of Natural History. Some of those used in the Gros Ventre Grass dance have been described by Kroeber, loc. cit.: fork, pp. 270–71; spoon, p. 271; whip, p. 271; crow-belt, pp. 271–72.

[4] Kroeber, loc. cit., p. 238.

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Iruska.[5] In its diffusion it reached the Assiniboine from the Sioux, —Rodnick places the date at 1872,[6]—and the Assiniboine in turn passed it on to the Gros Ventres, sometime between the years 1875 and 1880. We arrive at this approximate dating by reckoning the age of a now venerable old Gros Ventre woman informant who witnessed the actual transfer when she herself was in her later twenties or possibly early thirties. From all the evidence at our command it is fairly certain that she was born between 1850 and 1855. This informant not only was an eye-witness of the adoption of the ceremony by the Gros Ventres but also participated actively, so far as a woman could, in both the earlier and later phases of the dance. Before giving details of the regalia, personnel, and procedures it might be well to insert at this point her account of the actual transfer.

"The Gros Ventres were camped on the Milk River. They were joined there by the Assiniboine and the two tribes remained together while the Assiniboine taught the Gros Ventres the Grass dance. The Gros Ventres had never had any dancing of that kind before and called it jokingly *inaetenin* (moving-buttocks) referring to the way they danced. The Assiniboine gave crow-belts (feather bustles) to each of two men, and likewise swords to two others. They needed one man as spear (fork) man and two as *atsa'an* (waiters, servants). They also gave the Gros Ventres a big drum and everything that goes with the dance. The visitors showed the different individuals how to use these various things and taught the songs and dances that went with each. But they didn't do all that for nothing! Of all the things they had to give away to the Assiniboine! Even food was included in the exchange. The Gros Ventres had an enormous quantity of food prepared and you should have seen the number of puppies we cooked. The Assiniboine surely liked those pups. That was the first Grass dance we ever had.

"Then we moved camp from the Milk River over toward the

[5] Wissler, loc. cit., cf. table opp. p. 868.

[6] Rodnick, David, The Fort Belknap Assiniboine of Montana, A study in culture change, New Haven, Conn., 1938, pp. 123–24.

The
796 regalia were placed in front of their owners. Lay members sat around the sides.

[354] The fire was near the center of the dancing-place and beside
252 it the essential pot containing cooked dog flesh. The meat was
262 prepared by first rolling the carcass in very hot ashes to singe off
796 the hair and until the flesh was almost black, after which the entrails were removed and the meat boiled. Incidentally, the Gros Ventres were very fond of the flesh of puppies and used it in large quantities to supplement other types of food for feasts at various gatherings, including the Grass dance. The food for the feast, of which all present at the Grass dance partook, was heaped to the east of the fire.

796 In this setting the ceremonial eating of dog flesh, which involved the preliminary dancing with crow-belts, and so on, was carried out. We shall refer hereafter to this whole performance as the dog ritual because this is the core of the Grass dance proper wherever found and, so far as the Gros Ventres are concerned, remained essentially unchanged from the earlier through the later period. We use the term "ritual" without implying that there was any religious significance attached to the performance in the minds of the Gros Ventres. Connected therewith were a few sex prescriptions the violation of which were believed to be punished by vague misfortune, but that it had any deeper meaning for the Gros Ventres there is no evidence. On the contrary, their indifference toward possible symbolism, for instance, is illustrated by their acceptance at face value of the statement as to origin and meaning by an old Sioux from Fort Peck, Black Prairie Chicken, who claimed that he personally had created the Grass Dance, saying that he had "gotten his instructions" from a rooster; that the headdress of upstanding red-dyed deer hair
796 represented the rooster's comb and that the so-called crow-belt
● 177 was in reality a rooster's tail. My older informants knew this old man when he visited the Reservation many years ago, and they assured me that although the validity of his story was not questioned, it had had no effect. They maintained that when the dance was transferred to them, the Assiniboine had not mentioned

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where it had come from or anything about its origin, so the Gros Ventres simply performed it in the way it had been taught. They continued to dance in the same way, and never at any time did they feel that the dance was connected with the white man's rooster, or that they were supposed to be imitating that type of fowl.

The ceremonial involved the donning of the crow-belts by their respective owners, preceded by the incensing of the owners and of the regalia. The song connected with the crow-belt had four stanzas, each repeated four times while the owners danced. One of the owners then lifted the pot containing the already prepared dog flesh and, walking clockwise, placed it in the proper position to the north of the fire. The two crow-belt owners and the owners of the fork and spoon then knelt to the west of the fire while the owners of the swords and their two *atsa'an* (servants, assistants) knelt opposite them on the other side of the fire. These eight, as they knelt, danced by raising their bodies up and down to the rhythm of a special song which was sung once by the four male singers, repeated "like a chorus" during which the drum was beaten slowly and the four women singers joined in. As the chorus was sung the dancers raised their arms as though in salute. This song, with chorus, was repeated four times. After this the eight rose and, to the accompaniment of another song, danced in single file, the owners of the crow-belts in the lead and second place. They circled the fire four times, at the beginning of each circuit hesitating for a moment at the pot and making a gesture toward it. The dancing became more violent with each round and, on the fourth, the dancers "put on quite a show," stamping harder than before and using great exertion. On this fourth round each one touched the pot and the last one in line, one of the *atsa'an*, grabbed it up and put it to the west of the fire. The eight dancers would be panting and tired by this time.

The second crow-belt owner, however, transferred his belt to the fork owner who then danced alone. He followed the same pattern of first dancing slowly, and, at the beginning of each round making merely a gesture toward the pot. On the fourth

796 be repeated so that it was something of an ordeal. The sword owners would see to it that the dancers kept up, prodding the laggards until the series of songs had been completed.

[533] The singers themselves had a smoking song, one of the few [177] songs of the Grass dance for which words were adopted along with the tunes [11] from the Assiniboine. This song indicated a period of rest and relaxation for all but it was required that one of the officers provide the pipe and mixture for the singers.

Any member who left the dancing-place was obliged to surrender some piece of personal property as insurance that he would return. If he did not come back, the property was forfeit.

796 Another distinctive feature of the earlier Grass dance was the [43] throwing away of property and especially of wives. The term 586 "throwing away" is appropriate because a stick was held in the hand and after the holder publicly announced what the stick represented he would throw it to the ground. If, for instance, a member of the society had decided to give away his wife he would take a stick and say: "Here is so-and-so (naming the woman)" and throw the stick down. Sometimes another member would pick up the stick, thus indicating that he was taking this woman, but occasionally it happened that no one grabbed her and in such case the wife in question would return to live with her own relatives. The man who so renounced his wife was supposed to be through with her for good. It was said by informants, however, that once in a while, provided the wife had not been claimed 522 by another, the husband would want her back again. An in- 796 stance in illustration of this point was told to me. A man who 586 stood to my informant in the relation of enemy-friend [12] had so 572 disposed of his wife at a Grass dance. Some time later my informant saw the couple together again. My informant took ad-

[533] [11] Most of the Gros Ventre Grass dance songs have no words proper. This contrasts with the Arapaho Grass dance songs, as my informants are [177] well aware. The difference is perhaps due to the influence on the Arapaho of the Ghost Dance religion (cf. Kroeber, A. L., The Arapaho, AMNH-B 18, pt. 4, 1907, p. 320), which scarcely affected the Gros Ventres.

[572] [12] This was a joking and rivalry relationship entered into by presenting to a fellow tribesman an object captured from the enemy.

796 boine themselves considered the Grass dance as a modern form
575 of one of their own older soldier society dances.[15] Secondly there
178 were certain similarities between the original Star and Wolf dances on the one hand and the Grass dance on the other. In both types there was dancing to exhaustion and the employment of special officers to rouse the laggards,—the whip men in the first instance, the sword men in the other. Again women singers helped out occasionally in both. Still another feature in common was the custom of giving presents away, not to a relative who was a member, but in honor of that relative. Thus, the Grass dance became a part of Gros Ventres culture.

182 So long as Gros Ventre culture continued on its traditional eco-
178 nomic basis, the hunting of buffalo, the Grass dance fulfilled its function as the dance of the Wolf soldier society and was simply parallel to the dance of the rival Star society. The disappearance of the buffalo, however, wrought many changes in Gros Ventre life as it did in that of all of the Plains tribes. The Gros Ventres were fortunate in that the last large herd of buffalo happened to be in their hunting territory and thus they could benefit a little longer than most of their neighbors from this mainstay of their old way of life. This is not to say that prior to the extinction of the buffalo Gros Ventre culture was flourishing in pristine glory. Far from it. For one thing, at the time of the adoption of the
● [177] Grass dance between 1875 and 1880, intertribal warfare, with which many aspects of their culture were interrelated, was at a minimum and was itself soon to disappear. Again, certain aspects of their ceremonial life had fallen into disuse, some of the Sacred Dances not having been given for years previously. Nevertheless, although the religious culture was dwindling, much was still left and the social side was relatively intact.

182 *Later period.* The break in economic life with the killing of
796 the last of the buffalo in 1884 was accompanied by the virtual disappearance of the Gros Ventre ceremonial organization. The public rites of a religious nature, which had formerly made for social solidarity as well, were abandoned. The last Sacrifice

[15] Lowie, loc. cit. p. 66.

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796 178 431 156 554 gave away in his honor." When first adopted the Grass dance offered only one such opportunity—and a relatively minor one. As times changed, however, the Grass dance provided practically the sole occasion for gaining prestige while at the same time carrying out the old pattern of kinship obligation by enhancing the prestige of relatives.

The possibility in the later form of the Grass dance of paying for privileges, such as locking the door, or whipping those who did not get up to dance, gave further scope for the acquisition of prestige through liberality, as did also, of course, payments at transfer of office.

It was estimated by our informants that around 1900 as much as a thousand dollars in goods and cash changed hands at a single performance of the Grass dance. At that time it was not uncommon for the dance to be held at weekly intervals. So long as the Gros Ventre were relatively prosperous and had property to display and exchange according to the older patterns, the Grass dance continued to function. With increasing poverty, however, along [735] with other factors such as the changing points of view and interests on the part of the younger generation, and the dying out of [182] the older warriors, the Grass dance, the core of which was the dog ritual, gradually paled off leaving but the remnants of some of the round dances which had been added to the Grass dance as originally adopted from the Assiniboine.

Summary

796 177 575 Between 1875 and 1880 the Gros Ventres received the Grass dance from the Assiniboine. From the date of adoption up to about 1890 the Grass dance was performed only by members of one of the two soldier societies and the custodians of the ceremonial equipment were the officers. Offices were transferred among members according to the old Gros Ventre pattern.

796 [262] The essential core of the Grass dance was the dog ritual, a ceremonial eating of dog flesh, carried out by the owners of the equipment with the assistance of four warriors selected from among the lay members. Other features of the program at each